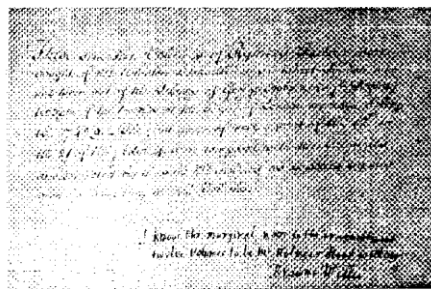


Evidence of George Holmes's Corrections to the First Edition of the *Foedera* (1704-17)

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Heretofore unreported evidence relevant to the publication histories of the first two editions of *Foedera*, regarded as a foundational work for the study of English history, appears to reside in a copy of the first edition (ESTC 148099), edited by Thomas Rymer and Robert Sanderson and published in seventeen volumes from 1704 to 1717 in London by Awnsham, John, and William Churchill, that is now in the Ohio State University Libraries' Rare Books and Manuscripts Department (shelfmark JX 636 1704). A handwritten notice on the flyleaf immediately preceding the title page of vol. 1 of Ohio State's copy indicates that its first twelve volumes contain corrections in the handwriting of George Holmes (1662-1749), Deputy Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London, based on Holmes's collations of original documents. The notice reads as follows: "These seventeen Volumes of Rymer's *Foedera* were bought of Mr. Whiston, Bookseller in Fleetstreet London, who had them out of the Library of George Holmes Esq. & Deputy Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London deceased Febry. 10. 1748-9. The first eleven of these & part of the 12th to the 21 of King Edw: 4. were compared with the Originals and corrected by the said Mr. Holmes as appears by his own hand writing in each Volume." Additionally, as if the description (composed by bookseller John Whiston, presumably) might seem exaggerated, the notice is underwritten with the following remarkable authentication: "I know the marginal notes in the abovementioned Twelve Volumes to be Mr. Holmes's Hand writing. Browne Willis". Willis (1682-1760) was regarded as one of eighteenth-century England's most competent antiquarians and, according to Hugh Amory, "if he did not know Mr. Holmes's work, few did."¹



Courtesy of Rare Books and Manuscripts, The Ohio State University Libraries Photograph by Michael Shaun McMurdie

Much is known about the publication histories of the first and second editions of the *Foedera*, with Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy's *Syllabus (in English) of the Documents Relating to England and Other Kingdoms Contained in the Collection Known as "Rymer's Foedera"* (London: Longmans, Green, 1869) giving the fullest account.² Hardy's details are largely recounted by

Sidney Lee, Thompson Cooper, and others in the *Dictionary of National Biography's* entries for the principals connected with the *Foedera*. According to Hardy, within months of appointing him "Historiographer Royal" in 1692, Queen Mary directed Rymer "to transcribe and publish all leagues, treaties, alliances, capitulations, and confederacies, which have at any time been made between the Crown of England and any other kingdoms, princes, and states, as a work highly conducing to our service and the honour of this our realm" (xxvi). Over the following two decades Rymer prepared for the press the text of vols. 1 through 15, most of vol. 16, and some of vol. 17, but only lived to see the publication of vols. 1 through 15, with printing of the latter, according to Hardy, "finished on the 25th of August 1713, about four months before the death of Rymer" (lxxiv). Following Rymer's death in 14 December 1713, his assistant Robert Sanderson saw the publication of vol. 16 in 1715 and vol. 17 in 1717. Awnsham and John Churchill published vols. 1-16 and William Churchill published vol. 17. According to Hardy, the total cost of printing the 259 copies of the seventeen-volume first edition amounted to just over £ 10,615 and only a few of the copies were sold, with the value of the seventeen-volume set raising "as high as one hundred guineas, whenever one was submitted for sale" (lxxxiii).

Finding the *Foedera's* first edition to be "defective at some points, and defaced by errors of date and by many misprints,"³ Jacob Tonson obtained a royal license for exclusive publication of a second edition. According to Hardy, work on the second edition (up to vol. 1, p. 113) began with "so little care . . . that many of the errors rectified by Rymer at the end of his preface were repeated without correction" (xciii), ultimately compelling Tonson to secure the services of George Holmes as editor. Hardy indicates the extent of Holmes's efforts:

Only the first twelve volumes, which contained the records derived from the Tower, were edited by Holmes; the name of the editor of the others does not appear. His corrections exhibit the nature of the errors which had escaped Rymer. They are more numerous in the earlier volumes. Tonson published in 1730 the result of George Holmes' collation in a thin volume, with the title of 'The emendations in the new edition of Mr. Rymer's *Foedera* are all printed in these sheets, for the use of those gentlemen who are possessed of the former edition, the pages of which are exactly referred to in such a manner that the reader may easily mark those alterations with his pen which are made in the new edition.' (xciv)⁴

Tonson published the *Foedera's* seventeen-volume second edition (ESTC 147190), edited by Holmes, in London in 1726-1735. According to Sidney Lee, the second edition was limited to two hundred copies and a set sold at £50 (557).

Just how well George Holmes performed the task of comparing the first edition with original documents in the process of preparing the corrected second edition and the separately issued list of emendations was disputed. Thompson Cooper reported that to prepare "the first seventeen volumes" of the second edition, Holmes "collated the documents with the originals in the Tower, and supplied many paragraphs and lines omitted in the former edition" (1085). Likewise, Sidney Lee was equally decisive, calling the second edition a "corrected reprint, issued by Jacob Tonson at the expense of the government, under the direction of George Holmes" (557). Both accounts, however, seem to reflect information provided by Hardy. In contrast, William Thomas Lowndes was less decisive, noting that the *Foedera's* second edition edited by Holmes is "said to be corrected" (2161). On the other hand, a systematic attack on the integrity of Holmes's corrections came from Dr. Adam Clarke (1762?-1832) who, according to Hardy, was protecting an interest in producing his own new edition:

[Clarke] brought forward the fact that when George Holmes was employed to examine and collate the articles in Rymer with the originals in the Tower, the fruit of his labour was a volume of corrections and emendations, which were printed separately, and yet this was not judged sufficient; consequently, a new edition of the work had been recommended and executed, in which the corrections and emendations were inserted in their proper places. ... Dr. Clarke asserted that he had sufficient proof that Holmes did not collate the papers at the Tower with any tolerable degree of care, and that many omissions had been discovered on recollection, not of single words only, but of whole sentences. (civ)

Employed by the Commissioners on Public Records to examine Clarke's charges in 1834, Hardy later (in the 1869 *Syllabus*) defended the integrity of Holmes's collations against Clarke's charges with the following extract from his previously unpublished report:

It is only necessary to consider the emendations really effected by Holmes in his edition, and to oppose them to the variations from the original records to be found, as well as in the new as in the old edition of Rymer, to make it evident that so severe a censure upon Holmes had better have been spared; for, notwithstanding this charge of errors ascribed to the neglect of the latter, I have not been fortunate enough to discover any instance of the correction of such errors in the *new edition*. In justice to the memory of Holmes, it is but fair to state that he certainly did collate most of the articles in the 1st edition with their corresponding documents in the Tower, discovering and correcting many errors, and that those he allowed to remain in the 2nd edition are but few in number, of very trifling importance, and scarcely, if at all, affecting the sense of the passages to which they belong. (civ-cv)

If the notice in vol. 1 is accurate, then the first twelve volumes of Ohio State's copy of the *Foedera*'s first edition appear to have been used by George Holmes to record his corrections discovered in comparison with the original documents in the Tower of London. Just as the description indicates, vols. 1-12 of Ohio State's copy contain extensive handwritten corrections and while Willis attested only that "the marginal notes" in the first twelve volumes were Holmes's—not that these notes reflected Holmes's comparison of the first edition with original documents in the Tower—it seems unlikely that they reflect anything other than Holmes's authentic collations.

Both Ohio State's corrected copy and the separately issued *Emendations* (1730) offer evidence of vigilant correcting. In general, most of the handwritten corrections correspond nearly exactly with the more than 7,000 corrections reported in the published *Emendations* (excluding the handful of corrections that *Emendations* reports for vols. 13 and 15). Like those identified in *Emendations*, the handwritten corrections effect both the marginal lemma and the texts of transcribed documents and they range from the addition, deletion, or substitution of individual letters and numbers to the insertion or cancellation of several lines of text. Not surprisingly, as reflected in *Emendations*, the handwritten corrections do not occur on every page of the corrected copy; that is, whole ranges of twenty or more pages (such as vol. 1, pp. 1-112; vol. 2, pp. 136-234 and 559-598; vol. 3, 512-534; vol. 11, 286-306; and vol. 12, pp. 142-168, 177-208, and 267-311) show no evidence of correction. On the other hand, it would be inaccurate to say that either Ohio State's copy or the published *Emendations* reflected less than a sustained attempt at correction—at

least from vol. 1, p. 113 (when Hardy says Holmes began as editor) through vol. 12, p. 148 (corresponding to the end of "the 21 of King Edw: 4" where the Ohio State copy's notice indicates that Holmes stopped).⁵

Given the facts that the Tower of London was George Holmes's place of employment from 1695 "for nearly sixty years" thereafter (Cooper, 1085) and that the volumes of the *Foedera's* first edition constitute an unwieldy bulk that is hardly portable, it seems plausible that the copy used by Holmes to record his corrections resided in the Tower while he worked there. Ohio State's copy contains no evidence of this, however. On the other hand, the handwritten corrections themselves show that it seems likely that Holmes recorded them directly into Ohio State's copy of the first edition, as opposed to transcribing them from some intermediary erratum into this copy. Pointing to collation of the originals is that Holmes's handwritten corrections are, in fact, in many specific instances more extensive and detailed than the corrections published in *Emendations*. Indeed, Holmes's handwritten corrections seem to show an intimate and particular knowledge of the original manuscripts. For vol. 1, p. 115, for example, *Emendations* identifies (by act, column, and line) corrections in some sixteen lines. Holmes's copy contains all of these corrections and, in addition, several others not identified in *Emendations*. For p. 115, *Emendations* notes "for *Et* write *similiter*" (I, 1, 1); in contrast, Holmes's correction capitalizes "Similiter." Whereas *Emendations* indicates "after *Mareschal* write *Com. de Pembroc*" (I, 1, 18), Holmes's correction adds a comma after Mareschal before inserting "Com: de Pembroc:", reflecting the abbreviations used in the manuscript. Additionally, in the line following (1,1,19), Holmes crosses out a printed underlined space, that is, blank space indicating original text that Rymer for some reason was unable to transcribe. Holmes's deletion of this underlined space is not the kind of correction typically recorded in *Emendations*; on the other hand, it seems exactly the kind of change that might be made by someone after a comparison with the original document. (Oppositely—and more curiously—in vol. 5, p. 289, II, 2, 6-7, for some reason Holmes's copy adds a series of spaced dashes that approximates two lines.) Elsewhere on p. 115, Holmes inserts "Rob:" before "Comes de Leicester" (I, 2, 1); this addition is not recorded in *Emendations*. Finally, whereas *Emendations* indicates "after *Robertus* write *Com.*" (I, 2,4), Holmes also changes "Robertus Mallet" to "Robertus Com. Mellet." and, furthermore, adds "et alijs" in a new line that follows (I, 2, 5).

Intimate details like these distinguishing Holmes's handwritten corrections from those published in *Emendations* are most prevalent in lists of names. In vol. 1, pp. 401, for example, *Emendations* identifies only four corrections, whereas in fact this same page in Holmes's copy contains more than thirty, nearly all in proper names. Holmes corrects "Neilla" to "Nailla" (III, 1, 10); "Gascon" to "Gaston" (III, 1, 16); "Mirebol" to "Mirebel" (III, 2, 14); "Cuzan" to "Scuzan" (III, 2, 17); "Cheillak" to "Cheillac" (III, 2, 24); "Arsac" to "Arzac" (III, 2, 27); "Chauntemarle" to "Chauntemerle" (III, 2, 28); and "Aurnoldus de Motelum" to "Arnaldus de Matelum" (III, 2, 29). Likewise, in vol. 2, p. 912, Holmes corrects more names, adding to the list "Vic. Norf. et Iohnes de Bretum in eodem Com." (I, 1, following 45); *Emendations* does not list this addition. Also in vol. 2, p. 938, *Emendations* appends a list of seven names, including "Laur de Beamflet," "Alex de Newport," and "Regin de Halsham" (II, 1, "penult.")- In contrast, Holmes recorded the names as "Lau.", "Alex", and "Regin" with supralinear bars, or tildes, over final letters indicating contractions that reflect abbreviations likely used in the manuscripts. Elsewhere, Holmes consistently uses other manuscript abbreviations, like "q;" (as in "quandocunq;") and "p" with a bar through the stem (as in "phoc vobis"), whereas *Emendations* records "que" (as in "quandocunque," vol. 6, p. 300, I, 1, 21) and "per" (as in "per hoc vobis," vol. 5, p. 298, III, 2, "antep."). Finally, in vol. 5, p. 203, Holmes inserts the names "Westmorl. Essex Hertf";

Emendations, however, miscorrects them as "Westmerl. Essex Hert" (I, 2, 26).

The many more substantial handwritten corrections that are not published in *Emendations* perhaps most convincingly argue for an authority based on new collation of the originals. The largest handwritten addition that is not reported in *Emendations* is appended to the end of act IV at the bottom of vol. 6, p. 135, and includes a title, lemma, and text, as follows:

Pro Edwardo Principe Walliae.

Pat. 33. E. 3. p. 3. m. 14.

Rex omnibus ad quos &c. Salutem. Noveritis nos teneri carissimo filio nostro Edw: Principi Walliae in viginti millibus Librarum pro certis prisonibus suis apud Bellum de Poyters nuper de guerra captis ab eodem Principe, per nos emptis, vide licet Pro: filio Adversarij nostri Franciae, Comite de Saunseir, et Domino de Craon, quae quidem Viginti Milia Librarum eidem Principi, in festo Scil Michis prox. futur. solvere promittus, bona fide. In cujus &c. Teste Rege apud Sandwicum xxij die Octobr

Per breve de Privato Sigillo.

While further examination of Ohio State's copy might discover more extensive additions, it seems unlikely that any large additions could have been fabricated by Holmes. At the same time, it would seem that evidence in Holmes's hand in Ohio State's copy vindicates neither Clarke, nor Hardy and his followers. That Ohio State's copy of the *Foedera's* first edition was collated against manuscript sources seems obvious. Moreover, if not thorough, the correction process was at least sustained. On the other hand, there is no evidence that Holmes collated every original and corrected every page in the *Foedera* as whole ranges of pages show no trace of correction.

What copy Tonson used to print the *Foedera's* second edition can only be supposed. Nothing in Ohio State's copy of the first edition shows that it was used as printer's copy. If there is, in fact, a relationship between the Holmes's corrected copy and the corrected second edition and, furthermore, the separately issued *Emendations*, then it would seem that at some point Holmes's corrections must have been transcribed into the copytext used by Tonson to print the second edition as well as into the copytext that Tonson used to print *Emendations*. Ohio State's corrected copy of the first edition, it appears, was preserved as Holmes's personal property and presumably left the Tower with him, although Cooper reported that Holmes's "manuscripts relating to the public records . . . were deposited among the official documents at the Tower" (1085). Cooper also noted that Holmes's "curious collection of books, prints, and coins was sold by auction in 1749" (1085). Copies of Abraham Langford's published auction catalogues describing Holmes's collections might reveal something about the copy's ownership, but reproductions of these volumes are not yet available.⁶ Several of Ohio State's volumes, bound in early nineteenth-century calf, contain the printed bookplate of Henry Labouchere, Baron Taunton (1798-1869), a "highly respected" MP whose barony "became extinct upon his death."⁷ But just how Ohio State acquired this remarkable copy of the *Foedera's*, first edition is lost. The University Libraries' accession records (4 September 1924, numbers 250366-250386) note the set's acquisition only and report nothing about its source.⁸

Notes

- ¹ I am very much indebted to Mr. Amory for sharing this information with me in his retirement.
- ² Hereafter references to Hardy's *Syllabus* (in English) of the Documents Relating to England and Other Kingdoms Contained in the Collection Known as "Rymer's Foedera " are from the reprinted edition (New York: AMS Press, 1974).
- ³ Lee (557); for a more detailed account, see Hardy (lxxxvi-lxxxviii).
- ⁴ The title of the work is actually *The Emendations in the New Edition of Mr. Rymer's Foedera Published for the Use of those Gentlemen who are possess'd of the Former Edition*. Hardy appears to get what he identifies as the title from the caption on page 1 that immediately precedes corrections for vol. 1. I am indebted to Susan Halpert of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, for providing me with selected collations from the Houghton Library's copy of *Emendations* (shelfmark Br 70.12*) and for making a photocopy of the book available to me.
- ⁵ In fact, Holmes's last handwritten correction appears in vol. 12, p. 176 (II, 1, 10) in 22 Edward 4.
- ⁶ These volumes are *A Catalogue of the Collection of Books, Manuscripts, and Books of Print, of George Holmes, . . . together with the curious and valuable manuscripts of the . . . Reverend Mr. John Lewis, . . . Which will be sold by auction, by Mr. Langford, . . . on Thursday and Friday, the 21st and 22d of this instant December 1749* [London, 1749] (ESTC 150823); and *A Catalogue of the Collections of Greek, Roman, and English Coins, Medals and Medallions, and Other Effects of George Holmes, Esq.; . . . and the Learned Colin Mac Laurin, Esq.; . . . Which will be sold by auction, by Mr. Langford, at his house in the Great Piazza, Covent-Garden, on Thursday and Friday, the 21st and 22nd of this instant December 1749* [London, 1749] (ESTC 188063).
- ⁷ Barker (368).
- ⁸ I am indebted to Ms. Bertha Ihnat of the University Archives of The Ohio State University for attempting to locate information about Ohio State's copy of the *Foedera*'s first edition (accession numbers 250366-250383) in the closely-written ninety-eight volumes that constitute the Libraries' accession records through 1951.

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